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## Be “Roadwise” and Secure Your Load

We’ve all seen it: a car with a mattress tied to the roof that looks anything but secure, a pickup truck with a bed overflowing with materials, or worse: that same mattress, piece of debris or other cargo falling onto the roadway, even smashing the windshield of an unsuspecting driver.

Unsecured loads that fall from moving vehicles is such a hazardous and frequent occurrence that many states, including California, have designated June 6 as “Secure Your Load Day” to raise awareness about the dangers of unsecured loads.

According to a 2016 study by the [AAA Foundation for Safety](#), nearly 80,000 crashes between 2011 and 2014, or more than a third of all debris-related crashes, were caused by debris falling from unsecured loads. According to the U.S. Department of Transportation, at 55 miles per hour, an object weighing just 20 pounds that falls from a vehicle strikes with an impact of half a ton.

For some, improperly secured loads resulted in tragic consequences that will last a lifetime. When Washington resident Robin Abel’s daughter was severely injured by an unsecured load in 2004, she began [raising awareness](#) about the importance of securing vehicle loads.

The California Office of Traffic Safety (OTS) joins Abel, California, and 45 other states, along with the U.S. Virgin Islands, to acknowledge [“Secure Your Load Day”](#) and educate the public about the simple precautions people can make that saves lives.

“Unsecured loads pose a serious threat to the safety of drivers,” said OTS director Rhonda Craft. “If whatever you are carrying has even the slightest chance of coming loose or falling out of your car or truck, think of the people driving behind you and the damage your unsecured load can cause.”

What is a secured load? A load is secure when nothing can slide, shift, or fall onto the roadway, or become airborne. Here are a few ways you can secure your load:

- Cover your load with a tarp. Covering and then fastening the tarp to the vehicle with rope and tie-downs is good way to help ensure that your load won’t fall out of your vehicle.
- Tie down using rope, netting, straps, or chains. Make sure that any covering like a tarp is tied down, can’t shift, catch the wind or pop out.

- Put lighter items lower and place heavier items on top to help keep them in place.
- Don't overload your vehicle.
- The "cram" technique also isn't enough – tightly packed loads can still come loose unless they're tied down.
- Double-check. Even if nothing falls out, an unsecure load can mean a ticket of nearly \$200

There are no good excuses for not securing your load:

- California law is clear – every vehicle that travels on every publicly maintained road must have a secured load.
- Heavy items and small loads can still fall out: Large truck tires, spools of wire, and pieces of wood that aren't secured. Even with a small load, items can shift or bounce out of a vehicle.

Take the time to secure your load. It saves lives. It's the law.

For more information on other traffic safety issues, visit the OTS website [here](#). You can also follow us on Twitter [@OTS\\_CA](#) and [CA OTSNews](#) and Facebook at [www.facebook.com/CaliforniaOTS](http://www.facebook.com/CaliforniaOTS) to keep up with the latest traffic safety initiatives and resources.